

# Soviet Party Official Denies Plans for Total Blockade of Lithuania

VILNIUS, Lithuania, April 22 (Reuters) — A senior Soviet Communist Party official denied today that the Kremlin was planning a total blockade of Lithuania.

"Plans for a total economic blockade do not exist," said Andrei N. Girenko, a secretary in the party's Central Committee. He was in the Lithuanian capital to attend a meeting of the republic's small pro-Moscow Communist Party.

Mr. Girenko told a news conference that although Moscow cut oil and gas supplies to Lithuania several days ago, other goods were still flowing into the Baltic republic.

But he repeated warnings from Moscow of a "catastrophe" if Lithuania continued its attempts to break away from the Soviet Union and said he hoped the republic's leaders would negotiate "in accordance with the Soviet Constitution."

## Defending the Embargo

"The measures which are being undertaken in accordance with the decisions of the President can in no way be considered as a blockade of Lithuania," he said. "They cover only a small part of the production that was supplied and continues to be supplied to Lithuania."

President Mikhail S. Gorbachev said last week that he would impose economic sanctions against Lithuania, stepping up pressure to make the republic revoke its March 11 declaration of independence.

The announcement concerned Western governments. The European Community said on Saturday that coercion would not help a negotiated settlement and warned of "policy implications."

Mr. Girenko's remarks contradicted accusations by a Lithuanian Deputy Prime Minister, Romualdas Ozolas, who said on Saturday that he had information that the Kremlin had ordered a total blockade, including a freeze on financial transactions involving Lithuanian enterprises.

Mr. Ozolas later conceded that trains were still arriving on Saturday and that he had no documentation of a total blockade.

## A Reduction in Supplies

But Mr. Ozolas said he had information that the Ministry of Transport had ordered a halt to road and rail deliveries, as well as documentation that consignments of fish and sugar destined for Lithuania had been diverted

elsewhere in the Soviet Union.

"The Soviet Union is like that," Mr. Ozolas said. "There is often no written order. Commands are given by telephone."

Algirdas Brazauskas, another Deputy Prime Minister in Lithuania's new Government, said on Saturday that supplies of car tires, cables, non-ferrous metal and other items had also been reduced by the blockade.

Gasoline pumps in the capital were

closed for several hours on Saturday and today as supplies ran out, and prices rocketed on the flourishing black market.

## Assessment of Conditions

After meeting with 100 managers of Lithuanian enterprises, Mr. Ozolas said that many plants would run out of supplies in three or four days and the financial freeze would make it difficult for many to pay their workers.

Mr. Girenko, who said he would not meet with members of Lithuania's Government during his stay, repeated the Kremlin's insistence that the republic withdraw its independence declaration and begin talks with Moscow.

Mr. Gorbachev has said that Lithuania can only leave the Soviet Union under the terms of a new law on secession. The law sets conditions that are dismissed by nationalists and many radicals as unrealistic.

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